

The Communicator August 27, 2024

I fear I was overly optimistic about the condition my eyes would be in when I promised a Communicator for today. I am typing essentially blind but wanted to get at least something out.

We were blessed this past Sunday with what can only be characterized as an abundance of good will and talent. This was our first attempt at a hybrid service in both Spanish and English and with lots of improvisation and good humor I think we all enjoyed a meaningful worship service.

To complicate things further, our wonderful **Guadalupe Estrada Gallardo**'s mother died on Saturday so she and **Remegio** were with family attending the funeral. As if we didn't know how much Guadalupe and Remegio do for us each Sunday, having to do it for ourselves was a wonderful reminder of gratitude. **John Stelly, Bill Graves and Jay Van Heuven** soon had the tables and chairs set up for the Hospitality Hour while **Debbie Jeffress and Isabel Graves** started the coffee, arranged the flowers and put the food together! It was real teamwork that had to be repeated when the hospitality hour ended. We are discovering there is no end to our abilities to get things done when needed.

Our worship service was graced with the shared wisdom of **Tom Esakin**. At the request of many of you, his homily is printed at the end of this Communicator.

Mother Naty Rangel bravely led us in both Spanish and English — attentively assisted by Acolyte Jorge Bredee.

We welcomed **Yolanda Fernandez** back to the choir which each week sounds fuller!

We are grateful to each of you and To **Professor Victor** who has so capably been filling in for **Laurie Rodriguez** during her absence.



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Father Douglas continues to improve - albeit not nearly as quickly as he would like. We are hopeful he will be able to return to us for Bishop Treviño's visit on Saint Michael's Sunday, September 15.

We extend our deep sympathies to **Father Victor Hugo** for the loss of his father this past Saturday. We are grateful to this wonderful man who will again fill in for Father Doug the next two Sundays. Neither Judy nor I will be in town. Hopefully all of you will pitch in and help him. In our absence, **Wendy Blake** will handle any emergencies. For any spiritual emergency the numbers for **Father Victor Hugo and the Rev. Gillian Ball** are in the Parish Directory which I am again attaching to this Communicator. Please check your own entry and let me



Hugo Garcia Hernandez
Q.E.P.D
22/09/1943 - 24/08/2024
Con profundo dolor participamos el fallecimiento de nuestro querido Hugo. Les invitamos a la Eucaristia de cuerpo presente el domingo 25 de agosto, a las 12:00 en la funeraria Hispano Mexicana, ubicada en la Avenida Morelos.
Velación: a partir de las 10:00 pm del 24 de agosto en la misma funeraria, sala 2.
Entierro: 3:00 pm Panteón de la Paz
Unidos en oración por el eterno descanso.
"El que crea en mí, aunque haya muerto vivirá"
(Jn 11:25)



BUDDHIST MEDITATION PRACTICE AND DHAMMA TALKS.

August 2024 sits and talks.

Beginners to advanced are welcomed.
BYOC/M (Bring Your Own Cushion/Mat)... or use an available chair!

A Dana Bowl will be present for any gifts of donations.

A community program of: "St. Michael and All Angels Anglican / Episcopal Church, Cuernavaca."

Meditation: A path to inner-peace & serenity through mindfulness.

DAYS: Wednesdays. TIME: 6:30-7:30pm. DATES: August 14th, 21st, & 28th, 2024. LOCATION: IN-PERSON in the "Pastoral Meeting Space", St. Michael and All Angels Anglican / Episcopal Church, Cuernavaca.

ADDRESS: Calle Minerva s/n, Esq. Eros, Col. Delicias, Cuernavaca (2 blocks behind WalMart Express on Rio Mayo).

Facilitated by Tom Esakin, a member of St. Mike's, a former lay-facilitator with the Theravada Buddhist Community of Toronto, & a Buddhist Chaplain with the Toronto Centre for Applied Buddhism.
Tel or Text or WhatsApp: 1.250.716.6772 / Email: thomas@spiritualfacilitation.org

know if there are necessary changes.

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Weekly Calendar

Tuesday, August 28, 10AM, Meditation, Stretching with Ann Moxey

Tuesday, 11-2, Library, British Tea

Wednesday, 6:30-7:30, Last “in person - at least for awhile -” Buddhist Meditation and Dhamma Talks with Tom Esakin

Wednesday there will be no Current Events with Charlie Goff

Thursday, 11-12:30, Thursday Yoga with Ann

Friday, 10-12, Senior Club in the Parish Hall.

Coming up Events

Sunday, September 8, Taller Siquieros, Benefit Concert of Contra Canto, a wonderful young women’s chorus sponsored by Onagh Ash and Walter Lopez. Contra Canto will be accompanied by Scherzino. For tickets or further info please contact Onagh at onagh.ash@gmail.com.

Sunday, September 15, Saint Michael’s Sunday, Bishop’s Visit.

Saturday, September, 28, 6PM, Home of Judy Frothingham, Home Concert and dinner to benefit Saint Michael’s Outreach Programs. For more information, please WhatsApp Judy at +1-603-727-2861.



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Attachment: Tom's Homily:

Homily – St. Michael and All Angel's Cuernavaca – 25 August 2024 –
Thomas Esakin



Last week, Gillian's sermon was on the life and Christian example of modern Christian mystic, Dietrich Bonhoffer. While I was deeply taken with Gillian's sermon for its history and identifying Bonhoffer's example as being applicable to modern times, her sermon also reminded me of the truth in the expression that "*God works in mysterious*

ways". For unbeknown to Gillian, I had discerned that my Homily this week would be on Christian mysticism and her sermon provided the most perfect and unexpected introduction to today's homily. *God is indeed good.*

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Unlike some of the other great world religions, Christianity is very much wrapped up in "Orthodoxy. This is a fancy way of saying that, historically, the Christian religion has had a prime focus on what its believers think. Thus, the importance of *The Creed* in Christianity. In the Christian religion, action flows from and after belief or faith.

This is in contrast to other great world religions. As many of you know my life has had extensive involvement in the Interfaith

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movement, including formally with Anglican Dioceses. A Jewish Rabbi who I met in Vancouver through this involvement, Rabbi Hannah, explained to me that Judaism is not a religion of faith; it is a religion of action. In technical terms, action is known as "Orthopraxy". Rabbi Hannah would be clear to me that, for Judaism, the focus is on correct action. Hinduism is also a tradition of Orthopraxy over Orthodoxy. Your own research can also discover the approach used by other religious traditions.

All religions share associations, whether historical or modern, to mystics and mysticism. In our

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Christian tradition, many of us are aware of the Desert Mothers and Fathers of the early church, of Julian of Norwich, of "The Cloud of Unknowing" with its aptly unknown author, of Therese of Avila, St. John of the Cross, and Ignatius of Loyola, all as historical mystics or mystical writings. Then are Marie-Aimée de Jésus, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Thomas Merton, Richard Rohr, Cynthia Bourgeault, Thomas Keating, and James Finley as modern Christian mystics.

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Sufi Schools of Islam hold such famed historical mystics as Shams of Tabriz, Hafiz, Rumi, and Rabia (a note that Rabia was a woman and former prostitute, and is revered in Islam for her mystical insights). A more-modern Islamic mystic is Hazrat Inayat Khan. One of the most famous historical Hindu mystics is Baba-ji and two well-known modern Hindu mystics are Yogananda and Sai Baba. The mystical founder of the Bahá'í Faith is Bahá'u'lláh.

Judaism, from which Christianity flows, has many mystics, such as Rabbi Hillel the Elder (who lived from 70 BCE to 10 CE), and whose teachings would, with certainty, have influenced the teachings of Jesus. Modernly for Judaism is Rabbi

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Philip Berg, a Kabbalist who expanded the global reach of Kabbalah and Judaic mysticism. An easy connexion of Judaic mysticism's influence on Christianity is that Jesus's *New Commandment* is itself taken from an earlier teaching documented and attributed to Hillel the Elder.

So what is a mystic? In Christianity, "mystics" are sometimes referred to as "con-tem-platives". That said, there are many different definitions of a "mystic". In my mind, the definitions

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that matter most are those of the mystics themselves. Definitions by theorists will root in theory (which then is akin to "Orthodoxy"). Whereas the definitions of mystics flow from "Orthopraxy" and their direct experience or action with mysticism.

For many mystics, Jesus's teachings were themselves self- evidently mystical. There is that famous quote of Ghandi's that: "*I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.*" In Christianity, a mystic is often referred to as one who moves in and out of "*Divine Union:*", with

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Divine Union being those moments where all that manifests through a piece of God's creation, such as you or I, is God's pure essence and nothing-at-all manifesting of an ego-like sense of self. Some Christian mystical nuns refer to this as their "Marriage to Christ", where they give conscious-birth to the Christ-essence in their being and intend to give birth to nothing else. Julian of Norwich described her mystical realisation as one where, in creation: "All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well." *The Dark Night of the Soul* of St. John of the Cross is

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frequently misunderstood as a place of misfortune when, in actuality to this mystic, it is the place of ego-less-ness where one directly encounters that which Christians name as God. An important observation made by St. John of the Cross is that in our spiritual journey, the last thing we need to let go of after the ego is letting go of God, in order to then directly-encounter Pure God.

Similarly to Jesus Christ and his New Commandment, which is to love God and love neighbour, Rumi of Islam professed the "Religion

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of Love”, which came from Rumi’s spiritual realisation that love permeates reality. In mystical Islam, “God loved, to be known.” And the punctuation in this phrase is important.: “God loved, [comma], to be known.” That it is through our beings and creation living pure love, that God’s pure essence manifests through creation and even knows Itself in creation.

So what is the purpose of this discussion today about mystics and mysticism? It all arises from our having a reading today from the Book of John, which in its style and substance is considered by

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many theologians to be the most mystical of the Gospels. Then is a reading from Saul, his name anglicised to Paul, whose writings can be interpreted strongly by some if taken theologically, and also understood as spiritually-wise if read mystically.

Very often Christians take the words of the Bible at surface meaning. However when mystics speak or write, they can incline to do so in layers of meaning, with the surface meaning commonly being the least important. This understanding is

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reflected in a teaching of Sufi mystic, Hazrat Inayat Khan, that: "The words on lips may not reflect the intentions of heart." Why layers of meaning? Well, depending on a person's spiritual over religious development, such layers are intended to help a person grow more deeply in-spirit by their learning to understand and deepen in a reading over time, including in understandings about its meanings. Often in layered spiritual writing, the superficial understanding is found closer to the beginning of a reading, whereas the deeper spiritual aspects often come later in the reading or can be understood through deep-listening. Thus, the use by con-tem-pla-tives of *Lectio Divina* as a tool for when

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reading scripture. *Lectio Divina* is a process where the same scripture passage is read three times and listened to in a very different manner each time.

To a mystic, the Gospel read today is understood clearly at its level of spirit. Yes, at the outset of the reading, Jesus speaks of flesh and blood. However importantly, Jesus also identifies for fuller context that the bread he refers to is

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“bread... from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died.” Thus Jesus speaks of a spiritual, not an earthly, bread. It is towards the reading’s close that the fuller spiritual meaning of the teaching is revealed when Jesus speaks: “It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.” To mystics, to eat of Jesus is not a physical eating, it is a spiritual eating, where the teachings of Jesus as voiced in his words then become the life nourished in the spirit within us.

When understood in this mystical way, it is then realised as not being coincidental that the Gospel of John begins with its famous opening of: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was

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with God, and the Word was God...”. For to a mystic, just as humans “are what we eat” from their physical food, so too when the spiritual food of God is fed to and nourished in our spirit, the flesh over time also comes to manifest that same and very spiritual food so eaten. Mystics across religions are aware that just as our body is nourished materially, spirit is *equally* nourished by the spiritual food we consume. This itself is one of the most common and also a most

important of the secret teachings across mystical schools.

Now let's, together, explore the layers of meaning in Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. I pull out the key mystical layers in the meaning:

"...our struggle is not against ... blood and flesh, but... against the spiritual forces...". Again, here is the emphasis that this is not a physical, but a spiritual, matter. Saul then guides that we:

"Therefore take up... God...". "Fasten...truth.... put on... righteousness...". "...put on peace...".

"...take... faith...". "Take.....the word of God."

Paul specifically invites us to strengthen our *spirit* in God, in truth, in righteousness, in peace, in faith, and again a renewed emphasis on God. Specifically, Saul invites us to

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strengthen in spirit. Paul is not inviting us to a dinner party of chile en nogada accompanied by an artisanal mezcal. Paul is inviting us to a spiritual dinner where we strengthen our being in the highest spiritual foods possible, especially in that spiritual food named God. This is ancient Jewish mystical wisdom and Orthopraxy that would have been understood by many Jews at

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the time of Christ and that has now more-often been forgotten through Christian Orthodoxy.

The North American Cherokee Indigenous peoples voiced their own awareness of the importance of spiritual feeding with this teaching: "One evening, an elderly Cherokee brave told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said, 'My son, the battle is between two wolves inside us all. One is evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego. The other wolf is good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith.' The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked, 'Grandpa, which wolf wins?' The old

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Cherokee simply replied, 'The one that you feed.'" (<https://medium.com/thrive-global/how-to-feed-your-creativity-abundance-and-success->

f74c2ca6cc35#:~:text=The%20old%20Cherokee%20simply%20replied,to%20feed%20the%20bad%20wolves)

You are invited, as you read or hear scripture in the future, to contemplate its layers of meaning.

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You are also invited to learn about and engage with *Lectio Divina*, as a means to open yourself to new and deeper understandings about your Christian faith.

Mystics and mysticism realise that, such as is worded in Acts 17:28, “we live and move, and have our being” in God. Through mystical teachings, practices, & insights, we can realise the truth that God is in all and is all; such as a bubble on the surface of the ocean is itself both bubble and ocean. As Albert Einstein himself voiced, only delusion makes humans think we are separate from the universe. With mystical approaches we can understand that the Word of God itself is a literal food; a food of spirit, that needs to be nourished each day to be strengthened in us. For us to then directly grasp the mystical truth inherent in the call of Psalms 34:8, which is voiced in the Canadian Anglican Communion liturgy, that we: “*Taste and see that the Lord is good....*” ***Amen.***

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